

Blind

for Jeff

There is so little difference between absolute dark and pure light. Once, my parents pulled over beside a Missouri highway to tire the kids out with a four dollar tour of a show cave. The bored teenaged guide slumped from plaque to plaque, reciting the script as if it were the white pages from some distant city. "When I touch this switch," he warned in the deepest intestine of the cave. "You will be in darkness more complete than anything you've ever known." He fixed his eyes over our heads. "Darker than space," he added, as if we weren't frightened and confused enough. Then, for an instant, he introduced us to an absolute. Light had never been. Cornfields had never happened. My Motley Crue tee shirt was a dream. I might have panicked had it not been for the sound of our guide counting twenty to himself.

We circled the sun some more, and it happened again: another road trip. Rain hammering earth. While I rode shotgun, Jeff drove my car and smoked and held forth on the Navy, Melville, the Kansas City Chiefs, and sex magic. He was still explaining the latter when lightning shattered the world. White lines and black road disappeared. Our hands, our faces, our cigarettes, our dashboard vanished. Thunder jumped us and ran. For an instant, we might have heard our tires rolling on wet pavement. Rain. But mostly we heard me: "The car is fried! The car is fried! Hit the brakes! Everything's fried!" I wailed. "Cool your shit," Jeff growled, and grabbed me with the hand that was neither driving nor smoking. "We're blind right now."

This last time? The world gray with ash and concrete. Day meaning night. Flesh meaning nothing. Suddenly, there were people in the air. All night, we saw people in the air. Everywhere we looked. I kept picking up the phone, with the hand that was not holding my children. I called my parents. I called Jeff. I asked everyone I love, "If we wait a minute, will we see again?"